

Lib. d. Plays, Plor. in, T. 1. 4.

M E D E A,

A T R A G E D Y,

BY SENECA

ATTEMPTED IN ENGLISH

BY THE

TRANSLATOR OF GRAY'S ODE

UPON

T H E B A R D.

C H E S T E R:

PRINTED BY JOHN POOLE, NEW GENERAL PRINTING-OFFICE,
FOREGATE-STREET, MDCCLXXVI.

P R E F A C E.

THE Author thinks it necessary to say a word to his Readers, before they enter upon his Translation of one of SENECA's best PLAYS: They will find that he has not followed the Original very literally, and that he has occasionally made free with Milton, Shakespear, Pope, and Addison. In the third line, and in twenty other places, at least, there is an odd foot; but the Author makes no other Apology for the Liberty he has taken in that respect, than by referring his Readers to most of the Writers of Blank Verse, which this Country has produced, and Milton (the first of them) in particular.

DRAMATIS

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

CREON,

MEDEA,

JASON,

HER NURSE,

HIS TWO SONS,

MESSANGER, CHORUS.

M E D E A,

A T R A G E D Y.

ACT I. SCENE I.

Corinth throughout.

MEDEA.

YE Gods, who over hymeneal rites
Preside; thou guardian of the nuptial bed,
Lucina; and thou* by whose auspicious pow'r
Tiphys, the first adventurer o'er the deep,
Sail'd in defiance of the roaring waves;
Phoebus, who with thy flaming orb divid'st
The hours; and Hecate, thou whose magic torch
Sheds on thy rites prophane a livid ray;
Ye Deities, by whom false Jason swore,
But by Medea not invok'd in vain;
Thou Chaos of eternal night; and ye

* Minerva.

Dire impious mansions of the damn'd; and all
 That them inhabit, hail! Hell's gloomy king;
 And Proserpine, whose happier fate in part
 Resembles mine, but not betray'd, and left
 Like me; all hail! Medea bids ye hail—
 But with no *cheerful* voice*. Ye ministers
 Of vengeance, come; with snake-entwined locks,
 Each in your bloody hands a fable torch,
 Brandishing high in air, ye Furies come: 20
 Come like yourselves, in the same horrid sort,
 As when at Jason's nuptial bed ye stood,
 And mutter'd curses o'er our heads: But now
 To Creon's palace (lo! I lead the way),
 To Creon's palace haste, and to despair
 And death give him, and all his impious race;
 But chief my hated rival; as for him—
 My perjur'd husband, as the heaviest curse
 That I can wish him, let him live; and far—
 Far from his country and his friends, still roam, 30
 Outcast, exil'd, and beg his bread in vain;
 Unknown, unpitied, let him seek, not find
 One hospitable roof; and even Medea's door
 Be shut against him: And his innocent children
 (For them too will I curse, since he begot them),
 Be like their father and their mother wretched!
 Why vent I thus my fruitless rage in words?
 Won't Heav'n and Hell my just revenge supply
 With all their terrors, all their flames? Oh thou,
 Bright author of my being, can'st thou see, 40
 Oh! Sun, thy own Medea thus distress'd,

* Milton.

And sit unmov'd upon thy golden throne?
 And can'st thou shine upon the world again?
 Methinks, thou should'st have turn'd away thy face
 With horror, and to th' East remeasur'd back
 Thy course; Oh! let me mount thy fiery car,
 And moderate the glowing reins; with speed—
 With furious speed,—I'd turn your burning axis
 To Corinth's double shore, and joy to see
 The boiling deep, and her proud spires in flames. 50
 But still destruction's in my pow'r; the torch,
 Sacred to Hymen, will I bear; awhile
 A witness of the ceremony be,
 Then at the altar stab the guilty pair.
 That were a poor revenge; I'll tear their hearts
 Out of their breasts: Vengeance, my soul have vengeance,
 If one spark of thy former spirit's left.
 Nature unsex me! make my savage purpose
 Colder to mercy than the frozen rocks
 Of Caucasus: For ne'er did Phasis see— 60
 Nor Pontus hear of such a deed of horror,
 As, Corinth, thou shalt know; unnat'ral, bloody,
 Terrible to nature, and to gods and men!
 My soul's on fire; it thirsts for blood, and longs
 To tear their limbs by piece-meal, and insult
 Their bleeding atoms. If such deeds as these
 My maiden spirit shudder'd not to act,
 What may an injur'd wife conceive, what dare
 An injur'd mother put in bloody practice?
 Hasten then to thy revenge; with all thy terrors 70
 Arm thee; destruction in thy right hand, hatred
 And fury in thy left: Know, thou vain bride,
 Thou perjur'd bridegroom, know, that my divorce,

In ev'ry dreadful circumstance, shall equal
The horrid ties that made Medea thine.—

SCENE II.

CHORUS.

YE sovereign pow'rs, who rule the skies,
Ye sea-commanding deities,
To the bridal couch repair,
And hover round the happy pair.

First be a milk-white steer decreed,
The victim of almighty Jove;
For thee, Lucina, a white heifer bleed;
But to thee, gentle queen of love,
Who can Mars himself controul,
And sooth to peace his haughty soul,
Source of pleasure, at thy call,
Let the tenderest victim fall.
Hymen, come, dispel the night
With thy torch of purest light;
Braid thy locks with rosy twine,
Dropping odours, dropping wine*.

Lucifer, harbinger of day,
By all carefs'd, by all admir'd,
Who are by love, and beauty fir'd,
Haste to Creüsa, haste away:
She, who far surpasses all,
That the Grecians lovely call;

* Milton.

All

A. A. T. R. A. I. G. E. D. A. Y.

5

All the virgins that resort
To Taygetus, or disport
On th' Aönian shore, or lave
In Alpheus' sacred wave.
Nor can Apollo's graceful ease,
Like Jason's manlier beauties please;
Nor can Bacchus' features vie
With th' all-conquering bridegroom's eye,
Brighter than the morning star,
Or the twin sons of Leda are.

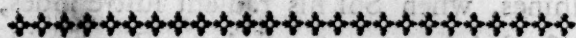
Join, ye propitious pow'rs, their hands
Who worthiest are of Hymen's bands;
She, comeliest of the virgin train,
And he, the glory of the plain.
See the lovely bride advance,
To join her fellow virgins in the dance;
Herself the fairest of the fair;

Cynthia less the meanest star
Outshines, when Sol his radiant lustre hides,
And she bright empress of the midnight rides.
Thus ivory ting'd with Tyrian dye,
Blushes; and thus the ruddy sky
To the early shepherd seems,
When on the dewy mead the twilight gleams.
Snatch'd from Medea's loath'd embrace,
Unworthy of a place

In thy chaste bed, receive
Cræusa's innocence, with open arms,
Prodigal of all her charms,

And taste the joys that mutual love can give.
Hymen your happy choice approves,
Consenting parents bless your loves.

Revel and sing, ye youthful train;
Let slavery relax her chain;
Laugh, and rejoice, and sport to day,
And join in many a roundelay.
'Tis time, 'tis time; O Hymen, haste;
Gay son of Bacchus, haste, and light
Thy torch, to add new splendour to the feast,
And gild the gloomy shades of night.
Many a wanton story tell,
To celebrate this festival,
Ye Bards and Minstrels, sons of mirth,
And give the sprightly sonnet birth.
But ill betide the princess, that elopes
With a wandering son of war;
That stains her reputation fair,
And disappoints her royal father's hopes!



ACT II. SCENE I.

MEDEA AND HER NURSE.

MEDEA.

DEATH to my hopes ! I heard the hateful sound
Of Hymeneal mirth ! And can the perjur'd,
Ungrateful Jason wed another ? Leaving 150
His fire, his country, and his wife forsaken

In

In a strange land, alone, unknown, unheard,
 To make her just complaints? Hard-hearted monster!
 In whose breast every benefit's forgot,
 Each obligation cancell'd: For thy sake
 I calm'd the roaring elements, subdu'd
 The fiery bulls, and doz'd the sleepless dragon.
 Oh! blind to fate, unhappy wand'rer, where,
 Where wilt thou fix thy just revenge? His brother—
 He has no brother, but a wife he has; 160
 A second wife; her will I sacrifice,
 And satiate my revenge. The blackest deed
 That e'er was done in Greece; by barb'rous nations,
 Whate'er of cruelty has been atchiev'd,
 Shall be renew'd, shall be outdone by me.
 The splendid guardian of my father's kingdom
 To a base robber given; my infant brother
 Mangled, to stay his search, the Pontic shore
 Still whitening with his bones, and good old Pelias,
 Who in th' enchanted cauldron met his fate; 170
 These were Medea's impious acts; nor these
 Alone: Whose blood have I not shed—
 That dar'd be Jason's foe? But know, thou false one,
 'Twas not Medea, but 'twas love that did it.
 Now let me plead *his* cause—In a strange court,
 A suitor for protection, and dependant
 On a proud tyrant's nod, what could he do?
 Rush on his sword, and bravely meet his fate.—
 Ah! no. He must not, shall not die. Be still—
 My frantic soul; Jason may still be thine. 180
 Let Jason live, ye Gods! For my sake live,
 Who sav'd his forfeit life! 'Tis Creon's fault;
 Creon divorc'd Medea from her Jason.

By his curs'd gold, and robb'd my orphan children
 Of an asylum in their father's bosom :
 All ties divine and human Creon treads
 Under his feet : Then let him meet the fate
 His crimes deserve, and glut Medea's fury.
 I'll fire the traitor's palace, and reduce
 His tow'rs to ashes ; the red flames shall gild
 Malca's cloud-cap'd brow, and winding shores,
 That cheat th' impatient sailor.

NURSE.

Peace, my daughter ;
 And in your breast your silent griefs restrain ;
 Patience, the only cure for your affliction,
 Let patience be your guide, and check your hot,
 Ungovern'd fury ; be a secret foe—
 A foe profess'd is none.

MEDEA.

My griefs admit
 Of no advice ; I'm so compleatly wretched,
 That reason pleads in vain, and thy cold caution
 Is lost in air. Let me go.

NURSE.

Stay, dear daughter ;
 Refrain your frantic purpose ; the still night,
 And conscious shades that hover o'er your head,
 Cannot conceal thee long.

MEDEA.

Let cowards think ;
 Fortune befriends the brave.

NURSE.

True courage knows
 The proper season to exert itself.

MEDEA.

A A T R A G E D Y.

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MEDEA.

Time must give place to vengeance.

NURSE!

Oh! fly, my daughter, Say not so;
Not one kind gleam to light thee on thy way
Does chance, or hope afford.

MEDEA.

I scorn alike
To hope or fear.

NURSE.

Your Colchian troops are fled;
Jafon deserts you in your utmost need:
Of all your mighty treasures scarce the wreck
Is left.

220

MEDEA.

Medea is an host alone.
Earth, sea, and air, and all their terrors dwell
Within this little frame.

NURSE.

But dread'st thou not
A monarch's pow'r?

MEDEA.

My father was a monarch.
NURSE.
An armed force he brings.

MEDEA.

I scorn the weapon
That's grasp'd by mortal hand.

NURSE.

'Tis certain death
To stay.

230

MEDEA.

MEDEA.

'Tis what I wish.

NURSE.

Oh ! fly, my daughter,
Consult your safety.

MEDEA.

Shall Medea fly ?

NURSE.

Consider you're a mother.

MEDEA.

A false traitor
Made me a mother.

NURSE.

Do you loiter still ?

MEDEA.

No—I will fly. But I'll be first reveng'd. 240

NURSE.

Peace, Dear Medea, peace : Your threats are vain,
And impotent.

MEDEA.

Fate do your worst ; I scorn
Your malice. You may bow me to the ground,
But cannot bend my free, unconquer'd spirit.
But who with haughty step advances toward us ?
He seems of royal port* ! It is the tyrant,
Creon himself.

* Vide Milton, Book IV.

" And with them comes a third of *regal port*,

" But faded splendor wan."

SCENE

A A T R A G E D Y.

11

S C E N E II.

MEDEA, CREON.

CREON.

THAT forcerefs here ftill?

Disgrace to Colchos and her fire! What fraud, 250
 What new impiety has ſhe to act?
 Who the unhappy object, ſhe devotes
 To her curs'd malice and revenge? This ſword
 Ere now had rid the world of the fell monſter,
 Had not my future ſon-in-law ſtep'd forth,
 And pleaded for her: Guilty as ſhe is,
 Her life I granted; but her quick departure
 From Corinth, blaſted with her helliſh charms,
 On pain of death, commanded. On ſhe comes,
 Pride in her eye, and indignation low'ring* 260
 Upon her brow. Where are my ſlaves? Convey
 Medea from our preſence; ſhe ſhall know
 That I am lord here. Hence, foul hag, avaunt;
 This inſtant quit our confines.

MEDEA.

What offence

Have I committed worthy baniſhment?

CREON.

What crime, does *innocent*† Medea aſk?

MEDEA.

If to be heard, as to a judge, I ſue;
 Hear me: Or if to be controul'd by frowns,
 I muſt not ſpeak, proud Tyrant, be obey'd. 270

* Milton.

† Ironical.

CREON.

CREON.

Or judge, or king, Creon *shall* be obey'd.

MEDEA.

Injustice never can support thy kingdom.

CREON.

Away ; to Colchos hie thee.

MEDEA.

I go. But send

At least my convoy with me.

CREON.

'Tis in vain ;

My resolution's fix'd.

MEDEA.

Yet hear me plead ;
If you condemn unheard, your sentence is unjust.

CREON.

Let Pelias listen to thy tale again, 280
And suffer ; but begin. I grant thee audience.

MEDEA.

How hard the task to curb th' impetuous reins
Of passion, and how worthy of a King,
To me, who once like thee a sceptre bore,
Is not unknown. For, tho' a wretched exile
In a strange land, deserted, suppliant, needy ;
By adverse Gods, and persecuting Fortune,
Shorn to the quick ; I've known the sweets of peace
And happiness,—amidst the blaze of grandeur :
Born of a royal father, and the Sun— 290
My great progenitor : The various nations round,
Where Phasis winds her silver streams, and where
Pontus extends his hospitable shore,
And with sweet fountains the salt ocean blends

CREON.

His

His heterogeneous wave; the warlike dames
 Of Thracia, who devote their youthful vigour
 To strict virginity, and manly prowess;—
 Once call'd Cætes king; and I his daughter,
 Joy of his age, and glory of his court,
 Shone with the brightest lustre, th' envied prize
 Was sought by wealthiest princes, who resorted
 To Colchos. But behold the sad reverse:—
 To them, who liv'd but in my smiles, to them
 An humble suppliant I come, and sue—
 In vain for their protection. Now, go boast
 Thy empty pow'r, vain man, and ample treasures,
 Which, with the slightest breath of unkind Fortune,
 Will vanish into air*. The pride of empire,
 The great prerogative of kings, is this;
 The friendless to protect, to aid the wretched;—
 To ope their hospitable door to all
 That call on them for food; this, this alone
 Is out of Fortune's reach. From my example
 Learn mercy, Creon. Let the pride of Greece,
 Let the great offspring of the gods, proclaim—
 To whom they owe their lives; let Orpheus tell,
 Let Orpheus warble out my praise, and teach
 Th' enchanted forests to repeat my name.
 The god-like twins of Leda; the brave sons
 Of Boreas, and Minyæ's gallant crew;
 Lynceus, whose visual faculties cou'd pierce
 The earth's thick center, and the depths immense
 Of Neptune, call Medea their preserver.
 Their valiant leader I forbear to name;

* Shakespear.

The

'Twas

'Twas for my *own* sake I preserv'd his life,
 Not your's; let Greece her grateful homage pay
 To the protectress of her martial sons;
 But Jason for himself. Now sum up all
 Medea's impious crimes; and she'll confess 'em.
 Let Argo, and th' illustrious freight she bore 330
 Of demi-gods and heroes, safe returning
 With life, with victory to their native country,
 Rise up in judgment 'gainst me: If you find
 Me guilty, and condemn; reverse the scene.—
 The Argonauts all perish in th' attempt—
 To win the glitt'ring fleece; and the first victim
 Of the bull's unremitting flame is Jason.
 Still shall I glory in the noble zeal
 (Tho' treach'rous to my father) that redeem'd
 The flow'r of Greece from death. But if my deeds 340
 Seem meritorious in your eyes, reward them:
 Yes, Creon, I confess myself a traitor—
 To my own father, but a friend to thee;
 Condemn me, if you can; I rescu'd Jason
 For thee, and thy Crëusa; that's my crime.
 Well did you know my frailty, when I clung
 Thus to your knees, and supplicated mercy;
 Thus low again behold Medea fallen,
 An humble suitor for some spot obscure,
 Where she may rest her miserable head, 350
 And pray for thee: If you deny me room
 Within your hospitable city, grant—
 At least, within your kingdom, a retreat.

CREON.

That I have rul'd with gentlest sway, have borne
 My faculties not haughtily, nor spurn'd

The

The wretched from me, needs no repetition;
 Or if it does, let thy own Jason tell thee;
 Whom, trembling at my feet, imploring mercy;
 From his own kingdom banish'd, and bereft
 All human aid, not only did I raise,
 But gave him my Crëusa, and her dower.
 Thou wast the cause that drove him from his country;
 Thy impious arts robb'd Pelias of his life,
 The instrument his daughters. To revenge
 His death, Acastus seiz'd upon Thessalia;
 Pursues thee thro' the world, and blood for blood
 Demands: But Jason, guiltless of thy crimes,
 Abhors the horrid perpetrator of them.
 His pious hands were never stain'd with blood;
 He gave no sanction to thy guilt; all—all—
 Thy more than female art, and dauntless spirit—
 Exceeding manly daring, did contrive,
 And execute; thy unexampled malice
 Futurity shall shudder to relate;
 As I do now with horror. Hence, begone—
 With thy curs'd herbs, and hellish spells; begone,
 And rid my trembling citizens of fear,
 Unnatural monster; seek some other country,
 And call on other Gods for aid.

MEDEA.

You bid me
 Depart, and quit your kingdom;—I obey.
 Fit out a vessel for me, or at least—
 Some kind companion of my flight ordain,
 To guide a helpless woman. Not alone
 I came; if war with foreign nations
 Thou dread'st on my account; not only me,

But

But with me banish Jason, thy distinction
 Is partiality; we both are guilty.
 'Twas for his sake that Pelias lost his life,
 Not mine. I only mark'd his way to empire
 With parricide. My flight with him from Colchos,
 With the rich prize; my royal fire abandon'd—
 In his old age; and my poor brother slaughter'd;
 Are all my crimes. Whatever else my husband
 Lays to my charge, is basest forgery,
 To please his new bride's ear with. Let him say
 The worst; disinterested love for him—
 Was all my fault.

CREON.

Thy arguments are vain;
 Begone; I'll hear no more.

MEDEA.

One moment stay,
 And hear my last request; my blameless infants,
 Let them not suffer for their mother's frailty.

CREON.

They shall not; I will be a father to them.

MEDEA.

Stay, I conjure thee by the gods, that wait
 To join Cræusa's hands with Jason's, hear me,
 By your most sanguine dreams of happiness;
 The welfare of your kingdom, which depends
 Upon th' unsteady, wavering gale of fortune;
 Grant me one moment to caress my children—
 And take a sad farewell, perhaps for ever.

CREON.

My clemency you wou'd abuse, shou'd I
 Believe thee, and devote the time to malice.

MEDEA.

MEDEA.

What malice can you dread in so short warning?

CREON.

Vengeance is quick.

MEDEA.

Can you refuse a moment
To misery, to shed one tear?

CREON.

I grant thee

No longer residence within our realm

Than one short day.

420

MEDEA.

You are too generous.

CREON.

Prepare for thy departure instantly,

For if to-morrow's sun beholds thee here,

Thy life shall answer for thy disobedience.

The nuptials wait my presence. Let me see

No more that face, the bane of all our joys.

SCENE III.

CHORUS.

BOLD was the man, who first essay'd

To launch his frail bark on the main;

Him nor the roaring waves dismay'd,

Nor cou'd the horrors of the deep restrain.

430

The solid earth forsaking, he

With doubtful course explor'd his way

Thro' the untry'd, liquid sea;

When betwixt life and death so small a distance lay.

C

The

The stars were then unknown,
 That in the night propitious shone ;
 Th' Olenian goat, the Pleiades,
 Whose cloudy influence rules the seas :
 Böotes, regent of the North,
 Who calls the storms and tempests forth, 440
 The name of Zephyrus ne'er was heard,
 The name of Boreas never fear'd.
 Tiphys undaunted spread his sails,
 To catch the flying gales ;
 From whatever point they blèw,
 T' unfurl, or to contract, he knew.
 Well skill'd the sail-yards to advance,
 He smil'd to see them dance
 Upon the giddy mast*, while hung on high
 His crimson streamers seem'd to kiss the sky. 450
 Far happier our fore-fathers lot ;
 Who innocently pass'd their time,
 And grew grey-headed in the cot,
 Which nurs'd them in their prime.
 Content with little, their own land
 Sufficient to their wishes gave† ;
 Nor did they seek a foreign strand,
 Nor tempt, for gold, the treach'rous wave.
 Argo first the dangers try'd,
 Of the vast bound'ries, that divide 460
 The continent on either shore,
 And heard th' indignant ocean roar

* Shakespear.

† An old Song.

Beneath her strokes; the angry wave,
 Scorning to brook so mean a foe,
 Toss'd the light vessel to and fro;

And shew'd the horrors of a wat'ry grave:
 Two rocks, that lurk'd unseen
 Beneath the billows green,
 The swelling surge began to lash
 With many a thundering dash; 470
 Now to the heavens ambitious ride,
 And now in horrid vales subside.
 Tiphys himself grew pale; his hand
 No longer can the helm command;

Orpheus's lyre was mute; the voice
 Of Argo* was no longer heard;
 Scylla's howling dogs rejoice
 To drown the music of the bard;
 What hideous yells were heard around!
 How their hearts trembled at the sound! 480

Sudden th' harmonious song
 Of Sirens stole upon their ears,
 And echoing the rocks among,
 Beguil'd the list'ning warriors of their fears,
 Orpheus once more his lyre essay'd—

With conscious emulation flush'd,
 So ravishingly sweet he play'd,
 Soon were the Sirens voices hush'd:
 And they, long us'd to conquer and command,
 Own'd a superior master's hand. 490
 Say, ye gallant sons of Greece,
 Was it not the golden fleece,

* Vide Notes in the Original.

That taught your daring youth to stray ?

Or did Medea's beauties play

About your hearts, more dang'rous far,

Than hidden rocks, or tempests are ?

Soon did the Argonautic band

The proud waves of the deep command ;

And Argo, goddess-built, return'd,

Triumphant riding o'er the main,

500

Fraught with the prize for which they burn'd,

Nor ply'd her maiden oars in vain.

Thus the wide, unfrequented way,

Open to navigation lay ;

New climates are explor'd, new cities rise,

And join in universal merchandize :

Already of Araxes' streams,

The Indian drinks ; the Persian dreams

Of future conquests on the banks of Rhine.

The time shall come, when Neptune shall resign 510

His liquid empire to the hands

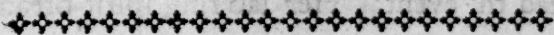
Of mortals, ranging unconfin'd,

In search of undiscover'd lands ;

Nor Thulé be the barrier of mankind.

514

A C T



ACT III. SCENE I.

MEDEA AND NURSE.

NURSE.

STAY, my dear child, and curb th' impetuous fire
 That hurries you to your destruction,
 Unguarded and alone. She hears me not ;—
 That frantic wildness in her look betrays
 Some horrid purpose ; like a Mænad roving
 On Pindus, or on Nisa's snow-clad brow, 520
 Full of the God, she foams ; she pants for utterance :
 Her fiery eyes, her glowing cheek, and breast
 Heaving with strong convulsion, all proclaim
 Her inward conflict. See ! her quivering lip !
 At length her voice bursts forth ; and thus she cries,
 With hands uplifted to the heavens, " Ye Gods !"—
Then sheds a sullen tear, indignant smiles ;*
 Then mutters horrid curses ; sudden starts,
 And sighs ; and then again with stifled rage
 She burns, then inward groans. What may this mean ? 530
 When all the storms that harrow up her soul†
 Subside, where will her indignation vent

* See a fine Picture of Mrs. Yates by Pine. † Shakespear,

Its fury? No mean cause has mov'd her thus :
 Too well I know the symptoms of her frenzy,
 And dread th' event. Her lab'ring spirit breathes
 No common vengeance.

MEDEA.

Let my hate resemble
 Love : unconfin'd, insatiable, undying.—
 Shall it be said, Medea tamely bore
 Her wrongs, and unrevenged saw the sun 540
 Go down, that shone upon their nuptials? No :
 Since my proud spirit deign'd to ask one day,
 That day shall be well spent. Whilst the round world
 Upon its axis turns, and seasons change ;
 Whilst sands upon the shore remain unnumber'd ;
 Whilst in the Northern hemisphere the Bear
 Shall be the pilot's guide, and rivers flow
 Into the sea ; so long my vengeful fury
 Shall know no bounds. No savage beast of prey,—
 Nor Scylla, nor Charybdis, that absorb 550
 Th' Æonian waves in their foul wombs, nor Ætna,
 Under whose fiery vortex Titan groans ;
 Can emulate my wrath : No steep-down torrent,
 Chafing on broken rocks, nor troubled sea,
 On whose white waves the West Wind proudly rides ;
 Nor shall conspiring elements withstand
 Medea's fix'd revenge. Without distinction
 I'll level all, and trample on their ruins.
 If Jason lov'd like me, he wou'd have scorn'd
 The tyrant's frowns, and flown into my arms ; 560
 But like a fawning suppliant he dreaded
 T^o offend the haughty monarch ; and Acastus,
 Th' usurper of his throne : He might at least

Have

Have begg'd some respite for his banish'd wife :
 But one short day allow'd, to bid adieu
 To my poor children ! but that day shall be
 A dreadful one ; that day shall bring to pass
 What time shall never cease to talk of. Yes—
 I'll shake the firm foundations of the heavens,
 And make Olympus tremble.

570

NURSE.

Peace, dear mistress,
 Let soft persuasion steal into your bosom,
 And lull your woes to rest.

MEDEA.

And lull my woes !
 They never can have rest, 'till Nature's laws
 Are chang'd, and all things to confusion hurl'd ;
 'Till universal Ruin, stalking round me,
 Shall grace my glorious exit.

NURSE.

Oh ! beware,
 Beware of Creon's power ; consult thy safety, 580
 Nor rush impetuous to thy own destruction.

S C E N E II.

MEDEA AND JASON.

JASON.

THOU unpropitious star, that shone malign
 On Jason's birth ! thou Goddess, whose false smiles
 Are fatal as thy frowns ; whose remedy
 Is worse than the disease, and both are desp'rate ;

C 4

Which

Which way shall Jason fly? I can't be honest,
 And live. Medea claims me for her own;
 And gratitude, and plighted vows, and honour,
 Speak loudly for her; shou'd her cause prevail,
 The consequence is death. If I wou'd live, 590
 I must be perjur'd. Death, I fear thee not,
 For my own sake; but oh! my helpless orphans!
 The hand that takes your father's life takes yours!
 Ye awful pow'rs of justice, witness for me
 (If I dare call upon your names), the father,
 Not Jason's vanquish'd! their fierce mother too,
 Perhaps to spare her childrens lives, will yield
 Her title to Cræusa, and consult
 Our common interest. I go to seek—
 And, if I can, prevail upon, Medea;
 But see! she comes! and in her furious look
 I read disdain, and anguish.

MEDEA.

Is it thus

We meet? And art thou come to chide my ling'ring?
 I'm not unus'd to wander; but with thee
 To wander, still was sweet, nor exile tedious!
 But now alone I go—Oh! Jason, whither!
 In what new clime shall poor Medea sigh
 For thy protection? Will my native Colchos
 Receive me? Phasis welcome my return? 610
 Or shall I fly for refuge to the shore
 Red with my brother's blood? Where shall I hide
 My shame? Or rest my banish'd limbs? Oh! say,
 Where shall I steer my course? Shall I revisit
 The Pontic ocean, thro' whose narrow straits
 I safely piloted the gallant crew

Of

Of Argonauts, for an adulterer's sake?
To Theffaly, or Tempe, shall I fly?
Or to Iölchos? No! too well thou know'st
Each road, each passage, that I op'd for thee, 620
Is shut on me for ever. You condemn
Your wife to banishment; and yet deny
The wretched exile a retreat. I own
Your justice; I've deserv'd it all; let Creon
Invent new torments to inflict upon me;
Load me with chains; confine me in a dungeon,
Where the sun never shines; the punishment
Were light, for crimes like mine. Oh! Jason, Jason,
Hast thou forgot th' intolerable flame
Of the fierce bulls? And the prolific teeth 630
Of the huge dragon, when amaz'd you saw
An iron harvest grow, an earth-born army
Prepar'd for fight (your bravest soldiers trembled)?
I gave the signal to engage, and turn'd
Their spears aside; each with his brother wag'd
Unnatural war; they fought, they fell together.
I pointed to the glitt'ring prize—afar,
And doz'd its scaly guardian, who 'till then
Had kept eternal vigils. For thy sake
Absyrtus bled; and Pelias' daughters slew 640
Their aged parent; who they fondly deem'd
Wou'd, Phoenix-like, from his own dust revive
To sudden youth again; for thy sake too
I left my native country, thro' the world
Following the fortune of a wand'ring pirate.
Now, by the love you bear your infant offspring;
Your tend'rest wishes for them; by the laws
Of hospitality, to me deny'd;

By all the monsters that I vanquish'd for thee ;
 By these hands, reeking still with hostile blood ; 650
 By all I suffer'd ; by the dread of death,
 From which I rescu'd thee ; by heaven's great Ruler,
 And Neptune, witness of our nuptials ! pity,
 Oh ! pity thy Medea ! and for all
 Her favours, grant her one. The golden mines
 The Scythian seeks on India's farthest shore,
 The tribute of a thousand nations, once
 Were mine ; so ample, that they wanted room
 To hold them. Out of all this treasure, what
 Did I bring with me, but my infant brother ? 660
 And him I sacrific'd for thee ; for thee—
 My country, father, and myself, betray'd.
 These were Medea's dow'r ; and at thy hands
 I re-demand them.

JASON.

Creon spar'd thy life
 At my request ; and chang'd Medea's sentence
 From death to banishment.

MEDEA.

Then as a favour,
 I must accept it, tho' 'tis worse than death
 To me. 670

JASON.

Be counsell'd ; and for thy departure
 Prepare thee instantly : You know how dreadful
 A monarch's wrath is, and that monarch *Creon*.

MEDEA.

Is this thy counsel, Jason ? To consult
 Cræusa's happiness, and send her rival
 Out of her sight ?

JASON.

JASON.

You wrong my pure intention ;
I love thee still, and never lov'd another.

MEDEA.

Thou ly'st ; false traytor to thy sons and me.

JASON.

What have I done, or wherein am I guilty ? 680

MEDEA.

In all that I am.

JASON.

There remains but this ;
Make me th' accomplice of thy future crimes.

MEDEA.

All, all, the past, and future are your own,
Who art the gainer by them. I wou'd teach
Thy base ingratitude a noble lesson ;—
When future malice shall enlarge my frailties,
Rescue my memory from slander ; tell them,
'Twas my true love for thee, that made me guilty.

JASON.

Yet think, Medea, of thy children ; who 690
Will be a father to them ? Check the transports
Of thy wild rage, and let me plead for them.

MEDEA.

No. I abjure, detest, despise, renounce thee.
What ! shall Cræusa bring forth slaves, to call
My children brother ? Shall the Sun's bright issue
Mix with the blood of Sisyphus ? And shall
Their haughty step-mother, with cruel taunts,
Insult my helpless boys, and call 'em vagrants ?

JASON.

Why will you draw destruction on us both ?

Let

Let me beseech you to obey the orders
Of the stern tyrant.

700

MEDEA.

Creon heard me speak,
And will not Jason ?

JASON.

What can Jason do ?

MEDEA.

Ask thy ungrateful heart, what for Medea
Jason shou'd not attempt.

JASON.

Two pow'rful kings
I make my enemies.

MEDEA.

Those kings shall find
How vain their pow'r is, when compar'd to mine : 710
Be thou the object of our different claims,
And let the conqueror decide thy fate.

JASON.

Alas ! I am not at my own disposal,
Thou know'st too well ; by sad experience learn
To dread the worst.

MEDEA.

Fortune shall stoop beneath
Medea's feet.

JASON.

Acastus close pursues us ;
And Creon has us in his pow'r already.

MEDEA.

Then fly : Forbid it heav'n ! that I shou'd wish 720
To see thy sword stain'd with an uncle's blood,
Or Creon's, howe'er guilty, since he is

The

The father of Cræusa; fly with me;
And let them live, and follow.

JASON.

Say, what forces
Have we to bring in competition with
Their pow'rs united?

MEDEA.

Add to them the Colchians,
Æetes at their head; to Scythia's sons—
Theffalia's warlike troops: I'll cut 'em off
All to a man. 730

JASON.

I dread a king's resentment.

MEDEA.

Nay, rather say, you court a king's alliance.

JASON.

Too long, Medea, have I list'ned to thee;
Farther discourse were dangerous.

MEDEA.

Say'st thou so?

O! thou, that rid'st upon the clouds sublime,
Hast thou no bolt, red with uncommon wrath*,
To blast us both this instant? Call forth all
Thy thunders, Jupiter; thou can'st not err. 740
Between a guilty pair.

JASON.

What madness moves thee
To talk thus? Since thy time is short, consider
If there be aught that Jason can command

* Addison.

From

From Creon's palace, to relieve thy wants,
Or to assist thy travels, speak.

MEDEA.

I scorn

Thy proffer'd services, and Creon's bounty ;
This only favour grant me ; let my children
Follow my wand'ring steps ; 'twere some relief 750
To shed my sorrows on their little bosoms.
You will not feel their loss : Cræusa's offspring
Will soon oblit'rate mine.

JASON.

Thy just request

It is not in my pow'r to listen to ;
For oh ! too strong I feel the father *here*.
Creon shou'd try to tear them from my arms
In vain ; they're all the pleasure, all the comfort
Of wretched Jason ; sooner with my breath,
My limbs, my life, I'd part. 760

MEDEA.

Then it is well :

There is a way, I find, to wring his soul. [*Aside*.
You'll not deny me sure, to take my last
Farewel of my poor boys ; one parting kiss
(Since 'tis my last request) you'll not deny me.
Whate'er my tongue too hastily has utter'd,
I pray thee to forgive ; and to impute it
To my distemper'd mind, not to cool malice.

JASON.

'Tis all forgot, and vanish'd into air ;
But, oh ! Medea, let not passion bind 770
Thy reason in its chains, but listen to

Her

Her sweetly-soothing voice ; and to oblivion
Give all thy sorrows.

MEDEA.

Is he gone ? For ever
Gone ? Is Medea then so soon forgot ?
And the remembrance of each gracious deed
Fled, like a dream ? Go then, ungrateful monster,
And revel with thy bride ; but know, Medea
Shall haunt thee still. I'll call the hidden pow'rs
Of magic to my aid.—To take them sleeping 780
In confident security, and little
Dreaming their foe's so near, is past my wishes ;
What dare I not attempt, when opportunity
Points out the way to vengeance ? Nurse, come hither ;
I have occasion for thy services,
Which have been faithful ever. You remember
The robe Æetes gave me, the bright wonder
Of mortals, in etherial looms embroider'd ;
With gems and gold of heav'nly lustre streaming.
This pledge of friendship, worthy of a God, 790
Apollo gave my father ; I will send
This, as a nuptial present, to Cræusa,
By my two boys convey'd : But first I'll dip
The fatal pageant in the blackest dye
Of Tartarus. Hasten thee, the rites prepare ;
An altar raise ; with ceremonies due
To Hecate the libation pour, and join
Your mistress in the dire solemnity.

SCENE

S C E N E III.

CHORUS.

NO fire, no tempest, can compare
 With the fury and despair, 800
 That rages in the female breast,
 At once with love and jealousy possess'd!
 Not even the Danube's rapid wave,
 Does like a furious woman rave;
 When overcharg'd with rain it swells,
 Nor in its wonted channel dwells;
 Destroying bridges in its course,
 And shaking castles with its force.
 Not half so fierce the Rhone,
 When his oppress'd billows groan 810
 Beneath the weight of melted snow,
 Rushing down Hæmus to the plains below.
 Rage is a secret flame,
 Which human reason cannot tame;
 Laughing at death, and scorning fear,
 Secure it rushes on the hostile spear.
 Oh! spare, ye Gods, the mortal bold,
 Who first, by Neptune uncontroll'd,
 Usurp'd his liquid reign;
 Oh! deprecate his wrath, ye pow'rs! 820
 For lo! with indignation low'rs
 The tyrant of the main!
 Phæton, whose impious pride
 Dar'd in his father's chariot ride,

Too

Too soon the fruit of his ambition found ;
 Around his head Jove's vengeance flew ;
 With him the world in flames he drew,
 Blasted with lightning first, then drown'd.
 The wat'ry regions still unknown
 To mortals had remain'd, 830
 Had not the Argonauts alone
 Nature's inviolable laws disdain'd ;
 But woe to them ! the impious crew
 Their bold intrusion shall rue ;
 Shall curse the fatal day,
 That led their youth astray,
 To violate the hallow'd grove,
 Sacred to Dodonean Jove !
 Woe to them ! whose hands prophane
 Ply'd the oars, or on the main 840
 'Twixt the Cyanean islands steer'd,
 Nor rocks, nor trembling quicksands fear'd !
 They shall rue their daring spirit,
 Who, eternal fame to merit,
 Forfook their native strand ;
 Who robb'd Æëtes of his fleece,
 And bore the glittering spoils to Greece ;
 But chief the leader of the impious band,
 Enrag'd the billows rose
 Against their hardy foes, 850
 And *Tiphys* their first victim fell ;
 Leaving to an unskilful hand,
 The disobedient helm's command,
 Which *He* had steer'd so well :
 Far from his native land, he lies
 Under inhospitable skies ;

In a mean grave his mighty shade,
 Companion of the vulgar dead;
 And Aulis, mindful of his death,
 Still in her port each ship detains. 860

Orpheus' pipe, whose tuneful breath,
 Charm'd the mute rocks, and senseless plains,
 That still'd the rapid torrent's roar,
 And howling winds, is heard no more:
 No more th' enchanted woodlands dance,
 Nor on the spray, in silent trance,

The Nightingale forgets her song;
 All that of the Bard remains,
 Or mangled lies on Thracian plains,
 Or floats, unburied, Hebrus' streams along: 870
 His ghost, permitted to return no more,
 Wanders with Tiphys on the Stygian shore.

Young Calais and Zethes fell
 Alcides' conquering arm beneath;
 Nor cou'd thy changeful pow'r prevail
 To save thee, Periclymenes, from death.
 But short thy triumphs last,
 O! Hercules; thy glorious labours past,
 Doom'd to a lingering fate
 By Juno's unrelenting hate; 880

Thou, who the King of Hell subdu'd,
 And tam'd the monstrous brood
 Of Hydras and Chimæras dire,
 Fell thyself by the hidden fire
 Of the envenom'd robe you wore;
 And Ætna's caverns heard thee roar.
 A furious Boar Anceus slew;
 And he, who did his hands imbrue

With

With his two uncles murder, fell,
Sent by his mother, after them, to Hell. 890

Ye merited the deaths ye knew,

Ye sacrilegious crew!

Hylas himself, whose tender years,
Could not be guilty deem'd,

Great Hercules bewail'd with tears,
But not from death redeem'd;

Go, tempt th' unfathom'd sea, ye sailors brave;

He, in a shallow rill, cou'd find a grave.

Nor cou'd a Prophet's skill prevent

His own predestin'd punishment; 900

On Lybian sands, in pride of youth,

Fell Idmon by a Viper's tooth.

And Mopsus too, in witchcraft old,

Who every mortal's fate foretold,

Could not foretell his own.

Peleus was banish'd from his throne:

Nauplius, from Capharëus' heights,

Fell headlong in the depths profound,

Where many a valiant Greek was drown'd,

Lur'd by the beams of his destructive lights. 910

His father's crimes Oïleus ru'd;

Minerva's thund'ring wrath pursu'd,

And in his mid career—

Troy's boastful conqueror o'ertook,

Transfixing to a pointed rock

Cassandra's impious ravisher.

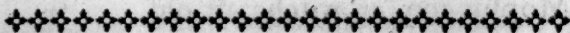
The glory of her sex, alone,

Who best deserv'd the name of wife,

Alcestes sav'd her husband's life,

With forfeit of her own. 920

Pelias, who, in an evil hour,
 Advis'd the sacrilegious theft,
 That Colchos' monarch of his fleece bereft,
 Soon fell a victim to the pow'r
 Of Sea's avenging God ; his horrid fate
 Medea's self might shudder to relate.
 Hear, gracious Neptune, hear our pray'r,
 And oh ! in pity Jason spare ;
 Jason, by Pelias's command,
 Was sent unto the Colchian strand :
 For him let meaner lives atone,
 And oh ! let Jason live alone !



ACT IV. SCENE I.

NURSE SOLA.

MY frame's convuls'd with terror; something dreadful
Beyond herself, Medea meditates;
Some monstrous prodigy is ripe for birth.
Ne'er did I see her so beside herself,
With fiery imagination, and rapt thought,
Intensely glowing. I have seen her hurling
Defiance to the Gods, and at her charms
The heaven's high concave tremble; but I dread 940
Even to conceive the dire event, that now
Is labouring in her breast: Soon as she reach'd

Her

Her rival's palace, out flew all her store
 Of herbs and spells, whose baneful influence oft
 Herself had trembled at. In her left hand
 The magic fillet holding, she invokes
 Libya's dire brood of Serpents to her aid;
 And all the monsters nurs'd in the bosom drear
 Of Taurus, torpid with eternal frost.
 The reptile tribe, from out the earth's dark womb, 950
 Hear, and obey her call: The Rattle-snake,
 Dragging his bulk immense with slow career,
 And brandishing his triple tongue, demands
 His errand; at her magic voice he coils
 His sinewy folds with horror. "But the earth's
 "Creation is unequal to the vengeance
 "Medea's wrongs demand (she cries), to heaven
 "For more effectual pestilence I sue,
 "And mightier poisons. Like a torrent huge
 "Thou, that in Northern skies, in ample folds, 960
 "The greater and the lesser Bear involv'st,
 "Descend, tremendous Serpent; and dismiss
 "Thy prisoner, Ophiūchus, from thy grasp,
 "And give his poison vent: And Python too,
 "Bane of Latona's Godlike offspring, haste,
 "Join the seven-headed Hydra, and repair
 "Your venom'd fangs, and live again, in spight
 "Of Hercules. Awake to new-born fury,
 "Thou scaly Guardian of Æetes treasures,
 "Once more obey Medea's voice, and sleep, 970
 "Or wake, as she commands thee." Having thus
 Invok'd each noxious reptile, she proceeds
 To cull the pois'nous herbs, and plants, that grow
 On the airy brow of Eryx, or are bred,

And nourish'd, by the snows that ever dwell
 On Caucasus' high rocks, still blushing with
 Prometheus' blood; with these the Parthians tinge
 Their barbed shafts, with fatal certainty
 To kill; the Arabs and the Medes partake
 The deadly secret. From its bed obscure 980
 She draws each mortal root, that to the German
 The Hercynian forest yields. Whate'er the earth
 Of pois'nous juice brings forth; or when the birds
 Warble their vernal symphonies; or when
 The drooping groves, their faded honours mourning,
 Sigh to the wintry blast, she plucks, and adds
 To her infernal treasure. Athos, pride
 Of Theffaly, and Pindus huge, their plants,
 Of taste unwholesome, at her dread command
 Spontaneously produce; Pangæus too 990
 Gives to her sickle the wild tendrils twining
 Around his rocks, t'increase the baneful store.
 The Tigris, and the Danube, join to pour
 Into her lap, the various flow'rs that grow
 Upon their borders, lovely to the eye,
 But death is in their taste; the Hydaspes rolling
 His precious min'ral streams o'er sandy desarts,
 And Bethys, with his peaceful current flowing
 Into the Hesperian waves, full many a root,
 Pregnant with subtle vapours, for her use 1000
 Invigorate. Some of these the Sorceress gathers
 At earliest dawn, and some at the still hour
 Of midnight; at her witching touch the corn
 Shrinks, and to poison turns. To these she adds
 The venomous spawn of creeping things, the Toad,
 The Centipes, the wrathful Scorpion;

Each

Each obscene bird of darkness ; and the heart
 And entrails of the shriek Owl, that affrights
 The guilty couch : Then separates
 The foul ingredients ; some, like lightning, piercing 1010
 The mortal frame ; and others, like sharp frost,
 Congealing the slow current of the blood.
 But hark ! the charm's begun : Her potent voice
 Nature obeys, and sickens at the sound.

S C E N E II.

MEDEA SOLA.

YE silent shades, that hover o'er the abyss
 Of utter darkness, and in eternal night
 Dwell with old Chaos, hear ! ye Furies howling
 In adamantine chains on the drear banks
 Of Tartarus, oh ! hear Medea's voice !
 Ye tortur'd souls, forget awhile your pains, 1020
 And to Cræusa's nuptials haste ; attend
 Invisibly on the devoted pair,
 And give them to destruction : Let thy wheel
 Stand still, Ixion, and thy limbs have rest ;
 No longer, Tantalus, in the treacherous stream
 Dip thy parch'd lips in vain ; and thou no longer
 Toil with vain efforts at thy arduous task,
 Oh ! Sisyphus ; obedient to my voice
 Thy rock is fix'd. But let Cræusa's father
 Feel all your tortures, all your pangs at once. 1030
 Daughters of Danäus, suspend awhile
 Your fruitless labour (lo ! your urns are fill'd) !
 Medea gives you leave to rest to-day.

Hecate, thou sovereign of the night, appear,
 And frown terrific with thy treble front
 Upon this dire solemnity ! O hear,
 Tremendous Goddess, hear my voice ! if ever
 I paid due rev'rence to thy laws, if ever
 My wild locks flutter'd to the midnight blast,
 While with bare feet I rang'd the secret grove, 1040
 And call'd down rain from the reluctant clouds,
 T' increase old Neptune's store ; if at my bidding
 Neptune himself recall'd his ebbing tides
 With fullen roar reflowing ; if the course
 Of heav'n and earth were chang'd at my command ;
 And the fix'd stars, descending to the main,
 Saw all the monsters of the deep ; the earth
 Uplifted to the clouds, and all the glories
 Of heav'n were open to the eyes of mortals ;
 If I have bid the face of nature smile, 1050
 And in a moment chang'd her flowery mantle
 To garb of blackest hue ; if Phasis hasted
 Back to his fountain-head,* and at my voice
 The Danube linger'd with his seven-fold stream,
 And slept in all his channels ; if the sea
 Roar'd, when the winds were hush'd, and not a breeze
 Rustling the groves among, the leaves forsook
 The branches of the oak ; the Sun stood still
 In his meridian height ; and from their spheres
 The Hyads started* : Hear, and obey Medea. 1060

For thee, this magic wreath I bound,
 With vipers twisted nine times round ;

* Shakspear.

For thee, Typheus, who the Gods defy'd,
With bloody hands this knot I ty'd.
This the last drop the Centaur shed,
When by Alcides' shafts he bled;
These are the ashes of the son of Jove
(Who conquer'd every thing but Love),
When frantic on the pile he lay,
And breath'd, in pois'nous gasps, his soul away. 1070
This brand Althea threw into the fire,
And saw her brother's murderer expire;
Unnatural revenge, that did not melt
At the fond struggles which a mother felt!
These feathers in her den the Harpy left,
By Zetus of her wild domain bereft,
These are the pennons of the dying Snake,
The wing'd inhabitant of Lerna's Lake.
See, see, the trembling altar gives the sign,
And owns the presence of a pow'r divine! 1080
She comes, she comes; her midnight car,
Hovering in the dusky air,

 Casts a malignant light around;
Obedient to Medea's call,
Soon will she reach this earthly ball,
 Unless she hears the timbrel's sound,
Or the trumpet's clangor shrill,
Loud echoing from hill to hill.

For thee, this turf-built altar grew,
For thee, the blackest lamb I slew, 1090
For thee, I stole this funeral brand,
For thee, I wave this ebon wand;
My locks with magic fillets bound,
And kneeling on the hallow'd ground,

Thy

Thy name, O Hecate, I adore :
 This branch, which grew upon the Stygian shore,
 I dedicate to thee. My shoulders bare,
 With these devoted rods I tear ;
 See, see, the crimson streams that flow
 Upon thy altar ! but my hands shall know 1100
 A bloodier task ; be steel'd, my heart,
 Against remorse, and learn to act thy part !
 Oh ! learn, my harden'd nerves, to bear
 The consequences of my deep despair.
 If thou woud'st know the reason, why
 So oft my magic arts I try,
 If thou wilt listen to my pray'r, once more,
 For Jason's sake, I thee implore ;
 'Tis Jason that demands thee now ;
 For him, thus lowly at thy shrine I bow : 1110
 This robe, which soon will grace his bride,
 In all her glory, all her pride,
 With thy baneful breath inspire ;
 Impregnating the hidden fire,
 That lurks within each treacherous fold,
 Glitt'ring with seeming gems and gold ;
 Let the subtle poison gain
 A passage thro' each glowing vein.
 I've learn'd Prometheus' art ;
 Vulcan his knowledge did impart ; 1120
 From Phæton the bolt I stole,
 That thunder'd after him from Pole to Pole ;
 The flames, that from the Bulls ascended,
 With the Chimæra's *waist* I blended ;
 And temper'd with Medusa's spleen
 The splendid mischiefs, that unseen

Surround

Surround the fatal present; but conceal
 The instruments of vengeance with thy veil
 Awhile; then animate the flaming vest,
 And fix thy keenest torments in her breast; 1130
 Scorch her with ling'ring malice, and invent
 New ways to aggravate her punishment.
 'Tis done: Three times I heard the voice
 Of Hecate, and the Fiends rejoice
 With barb'rous triumph at the sound;
 And thrice she wav'd her livid torch around.

Enough. Go, Nurse, and bring my children hither,
 Ye hapless offspring of Medea, go—
 Convey this garment to your future mother;
 With winning graces, and with suppliant air, 1140
 Beseech her to accept Medea's present;
 But soon return, to take your last farewell.

S C E N E III.

CHORUS.

SEE! where the bloody Sorceress hies;
 How wildly glare her haggard eyes!
 Where will her frenzy rest?
 Upon her brow sits horror plum'd*,
 And indignation has assum'd
 The empire of her breast.
 See! how she strides with haughty tread,
 And tosses high her frantic head! 1150

* Milton.

Above her train she proudly tow'rs,
At Creon furiously she low'rs ;

Her varying cheek, by turns,
Unsteady as the changeful Wind,
Betrays the passions of her mind,

With envy freezes, or with fury burns.

The Tigress, who has lost her young,
Thus raves the Ganges' banks along ;
With love, and with revenge, still glowing,
No bounds, no intermission, knowing. 1160

When will the Colchian Fiend depart

From Corinth ? And her hellish art

Cease to perplex this troubled State,

And King, devoted to her hate ?

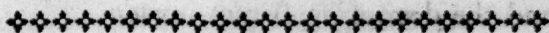
Haste to conclude this dreadful day,

And hide, O Sol, thy chearful ray ;

Light, Hesperus, thy orbit light,

Thou gloomy harbinger of night. 1168

ACT



ACT V. SCENE I.

MESSENGER, CHORUS, NURSE, MEDEA, AND JASON.

MESSENGER.

CORINTH's no more! the royal names that grac'd
Her empire, are no more! all that remains 1170
Of Creon and the bride, is dust and ashes.

CHORUS.

By whom, or what betray'd?

MESSENGER.

By treacherous gifts,
The specious bane of kings.

CHORUS.

What treachery
Cou'd lurk beneath so fair a mask?

MESSENGER.

I scarce
Myself can think it possible, who bring
The tidings, tho' these eyes so late beheld
The dreadful scene. 1180

CHORUS.

Relate each circumstance
Of Creon's fate.

MESSENGER.

The circling flames surround
The

The palace: In an instant blaz'd the huge
And pond'rous fabric; level with the ground
It lies; and the devouring flames invade
The citadel.

CHORUS.

Then haste thee to extinguish
The spreading desolation; let the sea
Supply her salutary waves.

1190

MESSENGER.

'Tis fruitless

Labour; the water serves but to encrease
The fire's rapidity, and instant turns
To sulphur'ous streams, that smoke like Phlegethon.

NURSE.

Fly, fly, Medea, from this seat of horror,
And seek some happier clime.

MEDEA.

What! shall Medea
Unfinish'd leave her great attempt, and fly?
Go now, and seek some other bride, thou traitor;
Where's thy Cræusa now? Yet incomplete 1200
Were my revenge, if I shou'd stop at this.
Does my fond heart still love? And are my wrongs
Sufficiently reveng'd, because I've robb'd
The happy bridegroom of his joys? My soul,
Unsatisfy'd, still pants for other victims,
And ampler vengeance; to the barb'rous task
With furious joy I haste. Begone remorse,
And conscience, and the last expiring struggles
Of nature, from my breast; and, in your stead,
Rage, hatred, and despair, and bloodier thoughts 1210
Than ever enter'd human heart, descend!

Whate'er

Whate'er my vengeful fury hitherto
Has wrought, is innocence; and soon, too soon,
By the dread consequence, shall Jason find
That this is but the prelude of the part
I am to act; if such the noble daring
Of my unskilful youth, and maiden spirit,
What may he not expect from ripen'd judgment,
And from an injur'd woman; from Medea,
Breathing revenge, and glorying in the name 1220
Of Murderer! With joy I recollect
My brother's limbs dissected, and his head
Hurl'd in his father's face; and he himself
Robb'd of his fleece: With savage pleasure listen
To Pelias' agonizing shrieks. But how
Shall I pursue the dictates of my fury?
When will my tortur'd soul have peace, and hands
Rest from their bloody labour! What new torments
Shall I invent, to drive the perjurd Jason
To madness, and despair! The dreadful secret 1230
Yet struggles in my breast; shou'd I divulge it,
The conscious air wou'd shudder! had the harlot
Left any pledges of her love for Jason,
I had been satisfy'd; but oh! ye infants,
Who must atone your guilty father's crimes,
For you my heart weeps blood; my trembling limbs
Can scarce support the weight of misery
That rests upon them; I am froze with horror;
The injur'd wife's forgot; and all the mother
Rushes upon my soul. What! draw my dagger 1240
Against my childrens lives, and shed their blood!
Nature revolts against the horrid thought.
What have they done? Their father is a villain;

That

That is their crime : To be more guilty still,
 They call Medea mother. Let them die,
 They are not mine ; they are, they are, my children,
 And therefore must they bleed. But they are guiltless ;
 Sweet innocents ! they are : So was my brother
 Guiltless. What mean these womanish drops that stain
 My coward cheeks ? Why starts my fault'ring soul 1250
 Back on herself* ? Now love possesses wholly
 My fond imagination ; then the sparks
 Of rage rekindle. As when two adverse winds,
 Ploughing the billows of the deep, contend
 For mastery, now here, now there, they rush,
 And 'twixt the green sea, and the azure vault,
 Set roaring war† ; so fares it with Medea ;
 Such fierce contending passions war within
 My bosom. Cease, fond Nature, cease thy strife‡ ;
 And oh ! let pity triumph. To these arms, 1260
 Your vanquish'd mother's arms, my children, come,
 And let me press you to my throbbing bosom ;
 You shall not die ; but for your father's sake
 Live, and be happy long. What have I said ?
 For Jason's sake ! shall they then clasp his knees
 With fond endearments ; shall he look upon them
 With rapture ? Soon, perhaps, they will be torn
 From my embrace, stretching their little arms
 Around their banish'd mother. Look your last,
 My || eyes, and take your last farewell, my heart, 1270
 For they shall never glad their father's eyes
 Again : Revenge, thou hast prevail'd ; they *die*.
 Oh ! that my teeming womb had been as fruitful

* Addison.

† Shakespear.

‡ Pope.

|| Shakespear.

As Niobe's; and as unhappy too—
 Each babe I bore, as her's! but are not two
 Enough to sacrifice unto the spirits—
 The injur'd spirits, of my fire, and brother?
 See, see, they come! the ministers of revenge,
 The Furies come! how frightfully they glare!
 Is it at me ye shake your bloody torches? 1280
 At me your fiery glances ye direct?
 And roll your livid eye-balls? Hark! they crack—
 Their snaky whips! the twisted Serpents hiss,
 And Hell re-echoes to the sound; and see!
 Megæra in the midst! her lighted brand
 Gilding the horrid gloom! but who comes yonder,
 Of shape imperfect, mangled, headless, shorn
 Of every limb, and all his wounds fresh bleeding?
 It is the airy form of my poor brother:—
 He calls on me for vengeance: Thou shalt have it. 1290
 Here turn your petrifying looks, and flash
 With all your lightnings on me; tear me, sting me
 To death with Scorpions;—lo! my guilty breast
 Is open to your stroke! but oh! my brother,
 Save me from these terrific Phantoms; send 'em
 To Hell, from whence they came, and bid 'em leave me.
 These hands shall satisfy your injur'd shade,
 These hands, that shed your blood: Go, horrid Spectre,
 Out of my sight, and thou shalt be reveng'd.
 Sure 'twas the clash of arms, I heard, and trampling 1300
 Of Horses, this way tending—I'm the object
 Of their pursuit.—But I have gain'd the summit
 Of this high tow'r, and look down on my follow'rs
 With scorn: My boys, unconscious of their fate,
 I have secur'd. And now the time is come.—

Courage, my soul ! and to the passing winds
Give the remains of piety and love.

JASON.

Whoever yet remains, to be aveng'd
On the destroyer of your king and country,
To arms ! ye gallant youths ; to Jason's standard 1310
Repair ; that we may seize the murderer
Of Creon and Cræusa : to this tow'r
She fled ; and shall be buried in its ruins.

MEDEA.

'Tis now my turn to triumph. I'm a queen
Again ; again my brother lives ; my father
Again possesses the fam'd golden fleece,
The guardian of his crown ; again the Colchians
Hail him their king : My spotless days of youth,
And happiness, return. O glorious morn,
That ushers in Medea's bridal-day ! 1320
Then haste thee ; be thy great revenge compleat
E'er they arrive, and interrupt thy triumph.
Why do my coward fears return, and mock
My resolution ? Hence, begone, ye scruples !
The bloody deed is done. Alas ! why did I
Do it ?—See, see ! the pretty innocent bleeds !
He bleeds to death !—What have I done ? Where am I ?
I glory in the deed.—Humanity,—
Awake no more ! and see, where Jason comes,
The wretched father, to behold his child 1330
Welt'ring in blood ! had he not been a witness,
My joy had been curtail'd ; but now, 'tis rapture !
'Tis extacy !

JASON.

Behold ! upon the tow'r

She

A T R A G E D Y.

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She stands ! hie some of you, and from the palace
Matter inflammatory bring ; so shall she
Fall by the fire, which she herself has kindled.

MEDEA.

'Tis well ; you're come to light the fun'ral pile
Of your own children. With due rites I've buried
Your lov'd Cræusa, and her royal father, 1340
And have preserv'd their ashes. Dost thou know
This boy ? Such as thou see'st him, soon shall be
His brother ; thou thyself shalt see him bleed.

JASON.

Stop ; I conjure thee, by the pitying Gods ;
Our common fortunes ; and thy marriage-bed—
Unviolated* ! spare, oh ! spare my child :
My last surviving boy. Macarius—
My son, my son†, would I cou'd die for thee,
And save thy guiltless life !

MEDEA.

Because thou lov'st him, 1350
And wou'd die for him, therefore shall he bleed.
Go now, and seek some other Virgin-bride ;
And from my loath'd embraces be divorc'd
Once more, because two lovely babes I bore thee.

JASON.

One hast thou sacrific'd to thy revenge ;
Oh ! let that one suffice.

MEDEA.

Had I deem'd one

A due atonement for his father's crimes,
Neither of them had died ; two are too few

* Seeming Paradox.

† Bible.

To recompense my wrongs: And if an atom
Of Jason yet remains, I'll plunge this dagger
Into my bowels, and tear out that atom.

JASON.

Since I cannot prevail on thee to spare
His life; at least defer thy bloody purpose,
And give some respite to a father's anguish.

MEDea.

'Tis granted: I'll delay the fatal stroke,
But to prolong thy torments for a moment,
With sportive cruelty, and insulting malice;
Then blast thy hopes at once. Each hour, each minute,
Of this blest day is mine; and I will use it
As a proud conqueror.

JASON.

Strike; my breast is open,
And I will thank thee.

MEDea.

Thus I *more* than kill thee.

'Tis done; and my revenge is satisfy'd.
Lift up thine eyes, ungrateful wretch, and see
Her, who was once thy consort; dost thou know me—
Jason? See! thro' the wondering clouds I sail
Upon the bosom of the air*; two dragons
Yok'd to my flaming Chariot! to Heav'n,
To meet my bright Progenitor, I fly;
Take thou thy earth-born offspring; and adieu—
For ever!

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JASON.

Go; and as thou fly'st, proclaim—
Proclaim to the wide world, "There are no Gods."

* Shakespear.

F I N I S.

